

Message Text

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE MESSAGE FROM UN
SECY GENERAL KURT WALDHEIM TO THE SEABED ARMS
CONTROL TREATY REVIEW CONFERENCE DELIVERED ON JUNE 20 BY
ASST SECY GENERAL ROLF BJORNERSTEDT.

BEGIN TEXT: IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO EXTEND MY GREETINGS
AND GOOD WISHES TO ALL THE DELEGATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE CON-
FERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE EM-
PLACEMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
ON THE SEA-BED AND THE OCEAN FLOOR AND IN THE SUBSOIL THEREOF.

WHEN THE TREATY ENTERED INTO FORCE FIVE YEARS AGO THIS REFLECTED
THE RECOGNITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY THAT THE EXTENSION
OF THE ARMS RACE TO THE SEA-BED AND OCEAN FLOOR WOULD NOT ONLY HAMPER
THE PEACEFUL USES OF THE AREA BUT WOULD CREATE NEW DANGERS TO INTER-
NATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY, AND ADD TO THE STAGGERING SUMS DEVOTED
TO MILITARY PURPOSES.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF THE TREATY WAS THEREFORE TO PREVENT AN
ARMS RACE IN THE VAST AREA OF THE BOTTOM OF THE SEAS AND OCEANS
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COVERING TWO-THIRDS OF THE SURFACE OF THE GLOBE. AS WE ALL KNOW,
TO ACHIEVE THIS END, THE TREATY PROHIBITED THE EMPLACEMENT OF NUC-
LEAR WEAPONS AND ANY OTHER TYPE OF WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION
ON THE SEA BED AND THE OCEAN FLOOR AND IN THE SUBSOIL THEREOF.
IT ALSO COMMITTED STATES PARTIES TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS CONCERN-
ING FURTHER DISARMAMENT MEASURES FOR THE PREVENTION OF AN ARMS
RACE IN THAT IMPORTANT AREA.

THIS OBJECTIVE, I BELIEVE, IS OF PARTICULAR RELEVANCE TODAY WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE FORMIDABLE TASK OF DEVELOPING A GENERALLY ACCEPTED AND PRACTICABLE LEGAL ORDER OF THE OCEANS. AS THIS CONFERENCE BEGINS ITS DELIBERATIONS HERE IN GENEVA, THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA IS MEETING IN NEW YORK. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF POSITIVE RESULTS IN BOTH FORUMS WILL HELP MINIMIZE THE RISK OF CONFLICT IN OCEAN SPACE. THE SEA-BED TREATY ALSO PROMOTES THE PEACEFUL USES OF OCEAN SPACE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL MANKIND, THEREBY FURTHERING ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS - THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY.

THIS CONFERENCE MEETS TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE SEA-BED TREATY AND TO ASCERTAIN THAT ITS OBJECTIVES AND PROVISIONS ARE BEING FULLY REALIZED, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RELEVANT TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS. ONE CANNOT, I THINK, OVEREMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS LATTER ASPECT OF THE CONFERENCE'S TASK. WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF STEEPING CHANGE AND INNOVATION THRUST UPON US BY SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF GREAT DIMENSIONS. THE REVIEW CONFERENCE WILL THEREFORE EXAMINE THE EFFECTS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN UNDERSEA AND WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY ON THE MILITARY USES OF THE OCEAN FLOOR AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR EFFORTS AIMED AT THE FURTHER DEMILITARIZATION OF THE SEA-BED.

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MORE THAN 90 STATES HAVE RATIFIED OR SIGNED THE TREATY, INCLUDING SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MARITIME POWERS. A THOROUGH AND FORWARD-LOOKING EXAMINATION OF THE TREATY WILL NO DOUBT PAVE THE WAY TO BROADER ACCEPTANCE OF THE TREATY AND TO ITS UNIVERSAL ADHERENCE.

AS WE ARE ALL AWARE, THIS IS THE SECOND CONFERENCE CONVENED TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF A MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT AGREEMENT, THE FIRST HAVING BEEN THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY REVIEW CONFERENCE. PROVISION FOR PERIODIC REVIEW OF MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT HAS BECOME A REGULAR FEATURE OF SUCH AGREEMENTS, AS EVIDENCED BY ANOTHER TWO AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE SEA-BED TREATY: THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION AND THE CONVENTION PROHIBITING MILITARY OR OTHER HOSTILE USES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES. THIS SHOWS THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS INCREASINGLY COME TO RELY ON PERIODIC REVIEW CONFERENCES AS A MEANS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE OBLIGATIONS LAID DOWN IN TREATIES. REVIEW CONFERENCES MOREOVER GIVE THE SIGNATORIES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF A TREATY.

THIS REVIEW CONFERENCE HAS ASSEMBLED IN THE PALAIS DES NATIONS,
WHERE A LARGE PART OF THE NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO THE CONCLUSION
OF THE TREATY WERE CONDUCTED IN THE CONFERENCE ON THE COMMITTEE
ON DISARMAMENT. TOGETHER WITH OTHER TREATIES, I ALSO NEGOTIATED IN
THE DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE - THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, THE
BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION AND THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION
OF MILITARY OR OTHER HOSTILE USES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION
TECHNIQUES - THE SEA-BED TREATY IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE RESULTS
THAT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED BY THE CCD OVER THE YEARS.

THE PREAMBLE OF THE SEA-BED TREATY STATES THAT IT CONSTITUTES
A STEP TOWARDS A TREATY ON GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT UNDER
STRICT AND EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL AND EXPRESSED THE
PARTIES' DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS TO THAT END. I
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EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT AT THIS REVIEW CONFERENCE THERE WILL BE
A RENEWAL OF THAT SOLEMN COMMITMENT.

I WISH YOU ALL SUCCESS IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS. END TEXT
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